

HISTORY OF POLAND

(An analytical summary)

BY

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It is impossible to understand the contemporary international situation, strifes and conflicts, as well as the actual tendencies of Polish policy, without some knowledge of their historical antecedents and justification.

Whatever may be said, it is an evident truth, proved by ten centuries in European history

Poland, independent and strong, has been, is, and will always be the keystone of European equilibrium, and, for that reason, of the world.

Short sighted statesmen, unable to understand this, working under the influence of contradictory and passing constellations, would prepare, for their own nations, as well as for the whole world, a future full of anxieties, dangers and worse catastrophes.

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I. THE FORMING OF POLAND

1 The Origins.

The earliest historical facts concerning Poland do not go back further than the middle of the tenth century. Over the immense area between the Elbe, the Baltic, the Dnieper, the Black Sea and the Adriatic, occupied at this period by different branches of the Slavonic race, it can be seen how settlements gradually came to be formed between the Bug and the Oder rivers. These nuclei, made up the origins of Poland: Polanians, Slezanians, Mazovians and Vistulanians, all peaceful tribes with a patriarchal form of Government.

2. The Germanic Menace.

The most serious threat to the large, wide spread Slavonic family in the tenth century came from Germania. It was at this time that Henry, the Fowler, who wiped out the East Elbian Slavs, and founded the Eastern March. Otto the Great, who aspired to a universal monarchy, entrusted the expansion to the ferocious Margrave Gero. Gero completed the conquest of the East Elbians, introduced colonists and missionaries and crushed both the Lusatians and the revolting Obotrites.

Victorious Germania appeared on the Oder river

and prepared to cross it. This was about 950, and it is at this time that Poland, as a nation, makes its appearance in history.

3. First Attempt at Independent Monarchy.

Conversion.

Under the rule of the Piast dynasty Poland had become the largest Slavonic State in Europe. The two most distinct centres of resistance and organisation that appeared in the beginning on Polish territory were the country of the Polanians in the North, with the town of Gniezno, and the country of the Vistulians, in the South, with the city of Cracow. The first Polish historical ruler was *Mieszko*. He reigned at the time when Margrave Gero was proceeding very energetically with the *Drang nach Osten*. Therefore Mieszko decided to conclude a treaty with the Bohemian Prince Boleslav whose sister, Dobrawa, he married in 960. At the same time he embraced Christianity. He thought that he might disarm the German invader by depriving him of the pretext of evangelisation.

Poland, although situated on the border of Central Europe, became a Western State. The Latin civilisation, implanted in the tenth century in this virgin soil, acquired, with time, an extraordinary splendour. It should be pointed out that Germania did not play the part she desired in the conversion of Poland. Rather was it the Bohemian priest Bohovid who consecrated

the marriage of Mieszko with Dobrawa, and Bohemian missionaries who introduced the new faith. Finally it was Cardinal Giles, the Nuncio of Pope John XIII, and Bishop of Tusculum, who presided over the establishment of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland. After his marriage Mieszko extended his power over Silesia, and on both sides as far as the river Bug. In addition, he conquered Western Pomerania, between the Oder and the Vistula. Thus, from the Xth Century we find ourselves in the presence of the principle constitutive elements of contemporary Poland. Mieszko laid the foundation of political and social order under the obvious influence of a Western civilisation. His successor received a fine heritage which was to fructify in his hands.

4. A Polish Charlemagne.

Mieszko was succeeded by his son *Boleslav I*, "*the Brave*" or "*the Great*". His reign was marked by keen political judgment, energy, and extraordinary wisdom. Boleslav's father had made the mistake of following the Slavonic custom of dividing his estate among his sons. Boleslav expelled his brothers and united, in his own hands, the entire heritage; he then set about continuing his father's task. He achieved the conquest of Pomerania and of the Baltic coast between the Oder and the Vistula; completed the organisation of Silesia, and seized, from the Hungarians, Slovakia. He fought against the Germans for thirteen years for the consolidation of all the Western Slavs,

and brought back to Poland, Lusatia, Moravia and Bohemia. Poland at that time extended as far as the upper valley of the Elbe and the river Saale (*the Treaty of Bautzen, 1018*). Boleslav subsequently conquered Red Ruthenia and captured Kiev. Poland reached the Dnieper river. He succeeded in making the Church in Poland independent. Gniezno was set up as an archbishopric and became the metropolitan city. From that time on the Polish bishoprics of Kolobrzeg (Kolberg), Cracow and Wroclaw (Breslau) were subject to Gniezno. In 1024 Boleslav summoned all his bishops to Gniezno and crowned himself king. After his death, he was buried in the Cathedral of Poznan, the new capital of the kingdom,

5. Withdrawal. International Strife.

Like all men of genius king Boleslav was ahead of the times in the achievements of his reign. However, his son, *Mieszko II*, who eventually died insane, was called "The Lazy" by his people. He lost a considerable part of his inheritance. At his death there started a period of internal strife, until finally his son, *Casimir I (the Restorer)* recaptured the traditions of his grand-father, he succeeded in recovering Silesia and put down the Pomeranians and Prussians.

6. Germania Repulsed.

Boleslav II, the Bold, the son of Casimir I, succeeded in recovering Red Ruthenia which was lost by Mieszko

II. His nephew *Boleslav III*, called "*Wrymouth*", took up the fight against Germania. In the famous battle of Hundsfeld or "*Dogs Field*" (near Breslau, in 1110), the German Emperor, Henry V, was routed. The treaty of Bamberg followed and Germania was thus once more repulsed. Boleslav forced Pomerania of Stettin to recognise him as its sovereign, and subjugated the Lutitser, Obotrites and the island of Rügen. Poland then extended to the lower Elbe.

7. Internal Strife. The Country Divided.

In spite of the principle of succession laid down in the testament of Boleslav III to preserve the integrity of the State (which the Pope had solemnly confirmed), the death of this monarch was followed by a period of misfortune. A continual changing of princes, a net of intrigue and rivalry, and series of invasions, played havoc with the country. The complete ruin of the country, as a political power, in these two centuries, which preceded the accession of Vladislav Lokietek ("*The Short*") in 1305, was prevented by two factors. First, the struggle for power was confined in the main to members of the ruling family, and the exclusive rights of the Piast dynasty were never disputed. Second, from the eleventh century, Poland had centred around one capital, Cracow (incontestably more important than the rest), upon which focussed the the social and political life. Thus Poland retained these two essential factors for the continuation of her political existence: a single dynasty and a single

capital. In these two centuries (1100 to 1300) a definite division of society took place in Poland, resulting in a preponderance of nobility and clergy. Between the peasants on the one hand, and the nobility (the magnates and the gentry) and the clergy on the other, there appeared in the XII-th and XIII-th centuries a new element, the bourgeois. The development cannot however be fully understood without studying the outlines of Germanic expansion in general, which is dealt with below.

8 Germanic Expansion.

(a) THE MARCHES. Driven back by Poland, in the X-th and XI-th centuries, Germania had to cease its expansion towards the East. But the time came when Germanic strength was once more directed to the Order and the Baltic. This second period of the German-Slav conflict began under conditions very difficult for Poland. The Marches¹ provided the beginning of a Germanic power which established itself on the borders of Poland and eventually became its worst enemy. Germania of the Electorate of Brandenburg and the Kingdom of Prussia. While the sons of "Wrymouth" were occupied in family disputes, the Germans, with a methodic ferocity, undertook the conquering of the Slavs on the lower Elbe and Oder rivers. The Margraves of Brandenburg expelled the princes of Great Poland from their possessions to the

¹ The Old March, the Middle March, later the New March and Uckermark

other side of the Oder, and later, even crossed beyond this river. This loss began the invasions of the ancient domain of the Piasts, made possible by Poland's internal difficulties which left her alone to face the foe.

(b) THE TEUTONIC ORDER. The same thing happened in the lands of Mazovia and Kuyavia where Poland had, for centuries, undergone Prussian¹ raids. To protect his country from these attacks and to help in the spreading of Christianity among this tribe, Conrad, Duke of Mazovia, founded an order of knights, called the Brotherhood of Dobrzyn, at the beginning of the XIII-th century. That order was destroyed by the Prussians. In 1225 Conrad summoned the Knights of the Teutonic Order (The Knights of the Cross). Germania, in a new form, and in a new manner, found itself supported by a Polish prince who was unconscious of the evil he was inviting. These Teutonic Knights soon became, for Poland, a serious danger on the north and even more serious than the pressure from the west by the Brandenburgs, as their purpose was to strangle Poland by cutting her off from the Baltic. They later acquired Pomerania by teachery and became a real scourge for Poland and Lithuania. The struggle against them was to last about three centuries.

(c) PEACEFUL INFILTRATION. The German element, at the same time, took another form of conquest, one of slow infiltration by way of colonisation. Domestic

¹ A Baltic tribe closely akin to the Lithuanians.

troubles (at the time of Faustrecht) drove away from Germany large numbers of people who, from preference, turned to the East. A large number emigrated to Poland attracted by its fertility and its liberties, while others came to Silesia towards the end of the XII-th century and the beginning of the XIII-th. More followed in the second half of the XIII-th century and appeared in what was called Little Poland. These emigrations had serious social consequences, as the Germanic people formed rural, and what was more important, urban centres for their activity. Moved by an ill advised generosity, Poland gave them an internal autonomy, known as "the Magdeburg law." If this new class of townsfolk did not develop normally, it was chiefly due to their foreign origin, for, from the beginning, they used their privileges for their own Germanic interests and not for the common good of the nation who had offered them such generous hospitality. After slow infiltration and clever ground-work, the German element threw off its mask and used force to try and usurp power in the country of its adoption, during the earlier part of the XI-Vth century. It was typical of the race. The Teutons seized the provinces they offered to recover and the townsfolk conspired against the freedom of a country, whose only crime was, that it had welcomed them and enriched them.¹

¹ Later, the German element (the peasant settlers and the middle class of townsmen) was assimilated with extraordinary ease. It was the power of attraction of the Polish culture

9. Danger from the East.

(a) GALICIA. At the gates of Poland, in Red Ruthenia, which was once conquered by Boleslav the Great, the new state of Galicia, with Holicz as its capital, was established. *Casimir the Just* only succeeded, for a short time, in subjecting it to Polish influence. In 1227 the Hungarian heir married the daughter of the Duke of Galicia and became the master of Holicz.

(b) THE ORIGIN OF LITHUANIA. At the same time, at another point on the Polish frontiers, there appeared a new state, called Lithuania, destined for a great future. Taking advantage of the disputes which were paralysing Poland and of the anarchy prevailing in the Ruthenian land, it was now Lithuania which aspired to gather them together. Poland was threatened by strangulation, by Germania trying to cut her off from one side of the Baltic and Lithuania exerting pressure on the other.

(c) THE TARTAR INVASION. While Poland was being gradually surrounded in this way, a terrible invasion started in the East and brought her very close to complete ruin. The Tartars overwhelmed the Ruthenian dukedoms, subjugated Kiev, devastated Galicia and the region of Lublin and Sandomierz. One of the Piasts, the Duke of Silesia, Henry the Pious, rallied the Polish troops and delivered battle at Lignica in 1241. The Duke was killed, and with him, some 10,000 knights, but the first impetus of the

invaders was broken. They then turned on Hungary, crossed it, and returned toward the East. Settled in the Ruthenian steppes, they were to be for centuries a continuous danger to European security. The battle of Lignica began Poland's heroic role as defender of Europe. Poland was to endure 91 Tartar invasions. The first onslaughts did not find her prepared, but whatever the cost, it was necessary to erect a barrier which could be respected by those hordes, unless the country was to be at their mercy (as was the fate of Russia). Poland, however, readily understood that that not only her own existence, but that of the entire Western Civilisation, was at stake.

II. THE REORGANISATION OF THE KINGDOM.

10. The Treachery of the Teutonic Order.

Two reigns were sufficient, not only to save Poland, but also to make her an independent and important European power. In achieving this she showed a vitality which few countries have equalled in all history. When *Vladislav*, called *Lokietek* (*the Short*), ascended the throne in 1305, the whole nation was ready to help him in his task. His first undertaking was to release Poland from the North, by recovering Pomerania, occupied by the Margrave of Brandenburg. Vladislav, however, made the unfortunate mistake of accepting the assistance of the Teutonic Order, who made short work of the Brandenburgians, but at the same time treacherously slew 10,000 Poles in Danzig.

(1308), and took over Eastern Pomerania with manifestly no intention of returning it to Lokietek, who had given them the mandate, and who, as King of Poland, was the legal owner of these territories. A new political organisation was created: the Teutonic Order which took over the lands of Chelmno and Dobrzyn, assigned to them temporarily, by Conrad, in 1225, as well as Pomerania. This time Poland was really cut off from the Baltic. Vladislav, busy with other matters, had to delay for a time the revenge he was planning. In the meantime, the case was brought before the Roman Court. The Pope sentenced the Teutonic Knights to return the seized provinces and to pay an indemnity which they refused to do. Instead, they looked for allies, largely among the Germanic people in Brandenburg and Bohemia, where the power of Germania was growing rapidly. And suddenly, the Germanic states arose as one against Poland along more than half her frontiers. The great duel was entering a new phase.

11. Defeat of Germania Leagued to Attack Poland.

Lokietek recognised the danger. Usually Poland kept good neighbourly relations with Hungary since there was much in common between the two nations, both as regards their internal politics and their relations with their internal politics and their relations with the Habsburg Empire. Lokietek, in 1320, married his daughter to the Hungarian king, and concluded an alliance with him against Bohemia. Thus Hungaria

was the first country in which Poland found support. Another was needed, and Lokietek turned towards Lithuania. In 1325 he concluded an alliance with that country which was further confirmed by a marriage—that of Lokietek's son, Casimir, with Aldona, Gedymin's daughter.

In this way the Polish King realised two things, very important for the future. Half a century later, one of them gave to the Polish kingdom, Jadwiga, the other Jagiello, the heirs of two royal houses, who by their union, were to lay the foundations of the great Polish power. From the time of Lokietek these ideas became important factors in the national policy. Thus the "Drang nach Osten" of the various Germanic states united against Poland, appeared in an indirect way, to contribute to the future power of the Polish State.

Hostilities began in 1327. United for the first time, the Polish and Lithuanian knights devastated Brandenburg. That gave the signal for the Germanic onslaught and the German Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, with one stroke of the pen, struck Poland off the map and assigned her to his son. One of the Emperor's vassals, the Bohemian King, John of Luxemburg occupied Silesia. The Teutonic Order invaded Great Poland and devastated it terribly, but on their way back, loaded with booty, Lokietek fell upon them by surprise, and defeated them disastrously in 1331 at Płowce. They returned the following year, but, in the meantime, Lokietek had died, not having lived long

enough to repair the error which he had committed, like Conrad of Mazovia, of allowing Teutons to meddle in the affairs of his kingdom. Because of this, one more century of effort was necessary to defeat that redoubtable Order, which employed all sorts of artifices, religious hypocrisies, and calculated ferocity, against the open courage of Poland.

12. Period of Stability.

The aim of *Casimir III the Great* was to give his kingdom a lasting stability, and this was apparent both in his foreign policy, as well as in his internal administration.

(a) THE DYNASTIC PACT. He improved his relations with Hungary. Louis of Anjou, the son of the Hungarian king and nephew of Casimir, as well as of St. Louis, was recognised as the future heir to the Polish crown. That act ensured the transfer of succession, for want of a direct heir, and saved the country for a long time from a dynastic crisis. It also had another advantage; as already mentioned, Galicia, incorporated with Hungary in 1227, and later devastated by the Tatars, became a gateway for the invaders on the Polish flank. Hungary offered Casimir a complete and permanent transfer of Red Ruthenia which was once conquered by Boleslav the Great, then lost by his son, and later recovered by Boleslav, the Bold. It was Casimir who succeeded in obtaining from that country this voluntary return (1340). It

was to remain for ever in his heritage. Volhynia was the second step in safeguarding the Eastern boundaries. At the death of Casimir, Poland was a great European State, stretching from Poznań (Greater Poland) as far as the Pripiet marches, solidly established in the West, and possessing, in the East, large outlets and boundless spheres of activity.

(b) INTERNAL ACHIEVEMENTS. Impressed by western culture, Casimir attended with extreme care to the social, economic and intellectual development of his country. He succeeded in unifying the country's legislation under the statutes of Wislicz in 1368. Derisively called " The Peasant's King ", he undertook for them measures without equal in his time, giving them individual liberty, definite duties etc., and as eagerly encouraged trade and industry. To the Jews, expelled from various lands, he offered generous hospitality and granted extensive privileges. In 1364 he founded the University of Cracow, which with Prague, is the oldest university in Central Europe.

13. From the Piasts to the Jagiellons.

Casimir died without a direct heir. He made arrangements, however, confirmed by the dignitaries, whereby the Polish crown was pledged to Louis of Anjou. And so an entirely new situation arose : after four centuries the Piast dynasty ended. Till then authority had been transferred by inheritance following on dynastic privileges, but, with *Louis of Anjou*,

the right to rule was the result of a positive agreement between the prince and the nation. The nobility immediately acquired greater power, and by the *Pact of Koszyce*, in 1374, their privileges and immunities were confirmed. Happily it was the final crisis in the formation of Poland. In 1384, *Jadwiga*, Louis' daughter, arrived in Cracow. In 1386, she married *Jagiello*, the Lithuanian prince, and thus Poland refound a dynasty and doubled her territory.

III. POLAND—A GREAT EUROPEAN POWER.

14. The Alliance and Dynastic Union.

Weakened by the struggle between the Ruthenian and Lithuanian elements as well as by dynastic quarrels, threatened by Muscovit power, and helpless before the Teutons, Lithuania's only hope of surviving was to look for allies. *Jagiello*, the Duke of Wilno, turned towards Poland. Poland was in a similar plight and also seeking allies. Common interests and various other circumstances determined an event fraught with incalculable consequences. *Jagiello* came to Cracow, was baptised there, and given the name of *Vladislaw*. He married *Jadwiga*, and was solemnly crowned. This Polish-Lithuanian dynastic union and alliance brought forth immediate results. While Poland, without much difficulty converted Lithuania to Christianity, the dukes of Moldavia and Valachia presented their oath of allegiance to *Jagiello* and later, Bessarabia did the same (1387, 1396). Casimir the Great's dream was

thus realised: Poland extended to Black Sea. Jagiello was offered the Hungarian crown and the Bohemian crown twice, but he refused both, the unification of his country—the foundation of a Commonwealth—counted above everything else in his mind.

15 Grunwald—A Teutonic Debacle.

Two neighbouring countries watched, with much displeasure, this vast extension which upset the eastern balance of power. These were the Teutonic Knights and the Margrave of Brandenburg, Sigismund of Luxemburg, the Emperor Charles IV's son. Moreover, thanks to the conversion of Lithuania by Poland, the Teutonic Order lost even the reason for its existence. War broke out in 1409. Some 100,000 Polish, Lithuanian and Ruthenian knights advanced towards Malborg, the capital of the Teutonic Order, and between Grunwald and Tannenberg, the Teutons met their defeat (1410). They lost all their standards, and left behind, on the battlefield, their Grand Master, Ulrich von Jungingen, and nearly all the Chapter, consisting of 18,000 knights, not including the mercenaries and other contingents of soldiers. Never before, in its history, had the famous Order undergone such a military disaster.

16. The Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania.

The famous *Union of Horodlo* (1413) strengthened the Polish-Lithuanian bonds. It was one of the most

characteristic proofs of the liberality of Polish policy. It was inspired by a spirit of fraternity unequalled in history. It brought about the complete fusion and merging of two separate peoples and the amalgamation of two distinct civilisations¹ The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was born. It needed still 150 years for a definite political fusion.²

17. Diplomacy of the Polish Church

The Polish clergy gradually acquired an important position in the country, thanks to its discipline, and the national role it played in opposing Germania. This was the time of the Great Schism. The weakening in pontifical authority, and the decline of the Empire, encouraged the Polish ecclesiastical authorities to take advantage of the situation, and elevate Poland to the rank of a great Christian power, heir to the Holy Roman Empire. With this in view, they partic-

¹ The Polish nobility shared its heraldry and its privileges with the Lithuanian nobility. Here are a few extracts from the incomparable preface of this Act, drawn up by the doctors of Cracow: "It is an evident truth that one cannot march to salvation without the help of the love of the neighbour. This virtue dissipates hatreds, breaks rancour, procures for all men a fruitful peace. . . We unite, join, and confound, by the holding of this present Act, our houses, our genealogies, our heraldry with the nobles and boyars of Lithuania, so that they may possess them, use them, and enjoy them as much as if they had received them from their ancestors as a hereditary patrimony. . . We promise never to abandon them in all adversities and necessities, but on the contrary to always lend them our advice and our help. . ."

² The *Union of Lublin* (1569), see page 13

ipated prominently in the councils of Constance, Bâle and Florence. At the council of Constance, Poland gained a great moral victory. Two diametrically opposed systems confronted her there: the programme of the Teutonic Order, based on the principle of force and spoliation, under the pretext of serving the interests of Christianity, supported by the Emperor, and the idea of Jagiellons, incarnating the Christian ideal and love of our neighbour, formerly represented by Leszek the White,¹ and retaken by this cradle of humane ideas, which the University of Cracow had become.² Then with a noble unselfishness Poland forgot her most essential interests—the struggle against the Teutons to retake Pomerania and open the approach to the Baltic—in order to face the common enemy of Christendom.³ It was Olesnicki, the Bishop of Cracow, regent after the death of Jagiello and guardian of her eldest son, *Vladislav* (called “*of Varna*”), who was the inspirer of this policy. According to him, it was the heroic fate of Poland to keep Europe safe with the price of her own blood, a fact that was never appreciated. It was because of this policy that Vladislav accepted the Hungarian crown,

¹ who in the XIIIth Century, being a partisan of the Pacific penetration and Christianisation, addressed a protest to the Pope against the oppression of the autochtone population by the Teutonic Order.

² Founded in 1364 by Casimir the Great, and restored in 1400 by Jadwiga; the celebrated maxim of its rector, Wlodkowiec, was: *Fides ex necessitate esse non debet.*

³ As the Ottoman Empire was called in Europe at this time.

and with the great-hetman, John Hunyady, fought many victorious battles against the Turks. He was finally killed together with many of the Polish knights at Varna (1444). The catastrophe of Varna shook Europe, and was the prelude to the fall of Constantinople.

18. Return of Pomerania and Prussia to the Motherland.

Poland as Suzerain of the Teutonic Order.

It was to the second son of Jagiello, *Casimir IV*, to whom the mission of retaking the struggle against the Knights of the Cross fell. The circumstances lent themselves particularly to this. The Prussian towns and lords, oppressed by Teutonic tyranny, formed a confederation, and, in 1454, an embassy was sent to Cracow inviting the king to take back these former Polish possessions.¹ Casimir accepted this request, and promulgated an act of incorporation of these provinces, at the same time guaranteeing their ancient privileges. The war against the Teutonic Order was begun almost immediately. Malborg, the capital of the Order, surrendered, and after thirteen years of hostilities, the memorable *Treaty of Torun* (Thorn) was signed (1466): the Order restored to Poland Pomerania and the city of Danzig (seized in 1308 from

¹ "*Prussiam semper subjunse regno Polonae*" will declare later (in the XVIth Century) the Polish ambassador, Dantiscus, to the Emperor Charles-Quint.

Vladislav the Short), the region of Chelmino and Michalow, and a great part of East Prussia—the regions of Malborg and of Varmia (all these provinces were to be called from then as *Royal Prussia*) the rest of East Prussia (called *Ducal Prussia*) also incorporated, remained in the possession of the Order, as a fief of Poland. Thus the King of Poland became hereditary lord of all these territories—*omnium terrarum Prussiae dominus et haeres*, and the Great Master of the Order became a vassal of Poland. Since the defeat at Grunwald, the Teutonic Order had never suffered such a disaster. A few years later, it was finally to go under. Meanwhile for the third time, Poland had opened the way towards the Baltic, while her union with Lithuania gave her an access to the Black Sea. She was thus in possession of large outlets in the North, as well as in the South. She was no longer threatened with strangulation, but had space to move about in.

19. The Breaking up of the Habsburg Empire.

Habsburg-Moscow Alliance.

Casimir married Elisabeth of Habsburg in order to have legal rights to Hungary and Bohemia. His son, *Vladislav*, was crowned King of Bohemia, and later, the Hungarians offered him the Iron Crown of Saint Stephen. Thus, the Jagellonians ruled simultaneously in Poland, Lithuania, Hungary and Bohemia, while the Habsburgs lost the two most precious jewels in their crown, and the most important pivots of their

power. To combat this, they summoned the Tsais of Moscow, whose growing strength was disquieting. In 1491, jealous of Jagellonian's supremacy, Frederic III concluded an alliance with Ivan III, against Poland. (After the fall of Constantinople, Ivan III, the famous "man who unified Russia" dreamed of making Moscow the heir to Byzantium.) A new problem arose for Poland and it brought in a new epoch.

20. Between two Hostile Worlds.

In order to offer resistance to Moscow, *Sigismund I*, "*the Old*", Casimir's son, and the youngest brother of Ladislaus, who was king of Hungary and Bohemia, had to cease his battles against the Habsburg Empire, when he was on the point of victory. Owing to her geographical position, Poland was forced to pursue, simultaneously, two policies, a Western and an Eastern. Between these two worlds, Poland was to act as an apostle and civiliser. Nothing was more difficult than to pursue a consistent policy, and to keep the balance of power, specially in face of an insatiable Germania, which was not held in check, but made more dangerous by Muscovite pressure toward the West. The first encounter between the Poles and Russians on the battlefield ended in a Polish victory in 1507. The enemy was driven back, and peace established. It was then that the Emperor Maximilian proposed to the Tsar a plan for the partition of Poland: but this was long before the time of Catherine II, Fredederic II and Maria Theresa and all these fine plans were brought

to nothing by the Polish cavalry. Under the command of Ostrogski they routed the Muscovites at Orsza, on the banks of the Dnieper, in 1514.

21 A New Danger: The Ottoman Empire.

Turkey, while pressing more and more on Hungary,¹ exercised, at the same time, a vast movement directed towards the South-east, in which she was assisted by the Tartars, thereby creating a danger for all the south-eastern provinces of Poland and her communications with the Black Sea. Since Moldavia and Valachia were subjugated by Turkey, thus exposing the Polish southern front, and since the Tartars, in the Turkish service, periodically devastated Volhynia, Podolia and the Ukraine, the Ottoman question became, for Poland, a burning problem. At the beginning of his reign, the French king, Francis I, offered to conclude an alliance against the Turks with the Polish king Sigismund I. Poland could therefore expect that the Habsburg Empire, which, after the Russian disaster at Orsza, was brought closer to Poland, would join her in facing this new common danger. But while Suleyman advanced, Francis I and Charles V started quarrelling over the question of supremacy, leaving Poland alone, to bear the burden of defending the entrance to Europe. Sigismund, however, entered into negotiations with Suleyman

¹ King Louis Jagiellon, Vladislav's son, was killed at the battle of Mohacs (1526)

22. The Submission of the Germans :

Albert of Brandenburg a Polish Vassal.

The Teutonic Order, which the generous treaty of Torun had not abolished (Poland left it in Eastern Prussia), took advantage of Poland's troubles and rose again. Two Grand Masters, Frederic of Saxony and and Albrecht of Brandenburg, refused to give their oath of allegiance, and in 1520 the Polish knights occupied Prussia. During the truce, Albrecht, with the majority of the Order, accepted the faith of Luther, and the Teutonic State, by secularisation, became a hereditary one, subject to Albrecht. Sigismund agreed, on condition, however, that Albrecht and all his successors should recognise Polish suzerainty. In 1525, Albrecht of Brandenburg (Hohenzollern) came to Cracow and presented his oath of allegiance at the feet of the Polish monarch. After centuries of implacable struggles, Poland regained the upper hand over the Order, which had been one of the most terrible instruments of war and tyranny ever known in history. Poland, after having recovered, by the Treaty of Torun, so called Royal Prussia (Polish Pomerania), also took in fief the remaining Ducal or Eastern Prussia. Sigismund, however, exactly like Casimir IV, made an error in not taking complete possession of that province: for one day, his vassal would liberate itself and the foundations of the Prussian State would be laid. Out of generosity the white eagle had taken under her wing a nest of

vultures which were to hatch and tear her apart.

23. Transformation of the Internal Structure of the State.

While the views of the Polish policy were being seriously modified, the internal conditions of the kingdom were also being subjected to a radical transformation. In the first part of the XVth century, and since Louis of Anjou, political and social power was in the hands of the ecclesiastics and the aristocracy. Two things now came to wrest that preponderance from the oligarchy: magnates (great nobles) were attracted to the East by prospects of lucrative colonisation, the clergy discredited itself by the failure of its foreign policy. Between the clergy, with its diminishing prestige and the nobility, diverted by its own affairs, a new and extremely numerous class, became conscious of itself, and desirous of taking part in the public life. It was *the mass of gentry, the petty nobility the "Szlachta"*. They obtained from king Jagiello several rights and privileges far ahead of Western laws, such as a law assuring personal inviolability ("*Neminem captivabimus, nisi iure victum*" of 1425¹). In 1454 Casimir granted the Szlachta (gentry) the privileges of Nieszawa which put into their hands the political powers. This was in fact, a statute of a constitutional monarchy. The *constitution of Nihil Novi in 1505* established definitively a constitutional

¹ Even England, a country justly proud of its civic liberties, did not obtain a similar law—the Habeas Corpus Act—until 1679.

form of government much to the advantage of the gentry. No legislative or military measures could be taken without the consent of the general Diet, which was composed of three national bodies: the king (principal sovereign), the senate (central power), and the deputies (delegates of the people). From this came about what can be called political morality, which had no parallel in any neighbouring country. This general high level of political honesty arose in Poland several centuries before anything like it appeared in the Western States. If the Polish nobility behaved in some respects similarly to the privileged classes in other countries, it must be acknowledged at least that they had an ideal, their passion for freedom. Moreover this Szlachta was not a cast, but a mass. In other countries the entire percentage of gentry in relation to the population of a country at the end of XVIIIth century did not represent more than 1 percent. In Poland in the XVIth century, the proportion of nobility was 2 to 3 percent, whereas, in the XVIIIth century it amounted to 1.2 percent. *This Poland found herself with a very large basis for her political life*¹. To understand this situation the words "democracy" and "gentry" must not be used in their modern sense. In other words *Poland became*

¹ In the XIXth Century the liberal France of Louis-Philippe accorded political rights to but 2/3 per cent of all French citizens (180,000 out of 30 million inhabitants); in Great Britain, before the reforms of 1832, less than 1 per cent (100 000) of the citizens had the right to vote, in Poland, in the XVIIIth Century, about 1.2 per cent of the citizens enjoyed full political rights

a democracy of the nobility, but later on, in 1569, she became a republic, and the nation a democracy.

24 The Age of Thought and Freedom.

The reign of *Sigismund Augustus*, son of Sigismund the Old, and his Italian wife, Bona Sforza, brought forth a period of equilibrium and peace. Above all a period of internal development, resulting in a glorious age of thought and freedom.

(a) THE PEACEFUL ANNEXION OF LIVONIA. In 1547, after having conquered Kazan and Astrakan, Ivan the Terrible turned towards the West in order to open a passage to the Baltic coast. Those lands, accessible to him, belonged to the Knights of the Sword. A huge Muscovite army fell upon Livonia (the present Latvia and a part of the present Estonia). The Knights called upon their neighbours for assistance and Poland alone replied. Thereupon, the Grand Master, Gothard Kettler, together with his order offered themselves voluntarily to the Jagiellons. Their Order was abolished, and Livonia was incorporated with Poland. The Pactum Subjectionis was signed at Vilno, in 1561, and the new province kept its complete autonomy.

The Treaty of Vilno was the third instance, in the three centuries, where Polish foreign policy made annexations in a friendly, harmonious manner. In the XIVth century, Casimir the Great, obtained Red Ruthenia by similar means, in the XVth century, Casimir acquired Royal Prussia, and in the XVI cen-

tury Sigismund-August, enlarged Poland by the peaceful annexation of Livonia¹.

(b) THE FINAL FUSION OF POLAND AND LITHUANIA. Ivan the Terrible's aggressive policy resulted in the final union of Poland and Lithuania and made them understand their natural common interests. The *Union of Lublin in 1569* was a most important event in Polish history. It settled once and for all the situation created in 1386 by the marriage of Jadwiga and Jagiells, and by the Union of Horodlo. It was the union of the Free with the Free, on a basis of mutual equality. Lithuania kept her administrative autonomy alongside that of Poland. The last effect but a *political final fusion*. The two countries were, in the future, to form one republic, with one Diet, and one King, elected in common, with Poland under the name of the Crown, and Lithuania under the name of the Great Duchy. As already mentioned, the Act of Nihil Novi in 1505 permanently settled the constitutional form of government to the advantage of the gentry. The constitution of the Union of Lublin, in 1569, put the destiny of the country in the hands of this petty nobility. When the Piast dynasty had nearly died out, Casimir the Great, their last representative, was careful to make, in good time, provisions for the

¹ During the reign of Sigismund Augustus, the ties attaching Ducal Prussia to Poland were also solidly reinforced. the King of Poland acquired the right to intervene in the domestic affairs of their fief—*ius appellandi* (the Royal Tribunal became the Highest Court of Appeal for the tribunals of Ducal Prussia,—1546, 1569, 1585)

succession, and the nation, in accepting the house of Anjou, did but confirm his choice. The Union of Lublin also laid down, without reservations, *the principle of electivity*. It specified quite clearly that the Polish-Lithuanian Diet had an absolute right in the choice of the sovereign. *In 1505 Poland had become a constitutional monarchy, but, in 1569, she became a republic.*

(c) "THE GOLDEN AGE." From the time of the great councils of the XVth Century, Poland had been imbued with the new spirit of progress, and had come into close contact with Italy, the birthplace of the Renaissance. Moreover, it was a Pole, Cardinal Hozius, who presided at the Council of Trent. Pope Pius II gave great praise to the classic Latin prose of Cardinal Olesnicki, Chancellor and guardian to King Ladislaus of Varna. An Archbishop, Gregory of Sanok, took up the cudgels against scholasticism, and made a commentary on Virgil's poetry at the University of Cracow. From this University came the famous Polish astronomer, Copernic. During this period a crown of artists and savants, as for example Buonaccorsi, came up from Italy, and the young men of Poland gathered together in Rome, in Padua and in Bologne. The combined influences of the Renaissance and the Reformation produced what can rightly be called "The Golden Age". Polish culture was highly appreciated by enlightened contemporaries. Such Humanists as Erasmus and both the Manutius brothers wrote of Poland with noteworthy praise. During the

time of the wars of Religion, which ravaged and laid waste Europe, Poland—an essentially Catholic country—showed the greatest tolerance. she welcomed and protected all sects, even the most extreme.

(d) CONCLUSION. No other nation of any time has understood and assimilated Latin culture as thoroughly as Poland in XVIth Century. This attraction to the Eternal City is explained by the relationship between Rome's ancient and Poland's living characteristics: both had the same spirit of independence, the same idea of legality, the same national pride, and the same belief in public rights and freedom of speech.

The history of Poland presents a splendid anachronism. In a Europe full of hatred and cupidities, with blood being shed everywhere, for thrones and for the interpretations of the Bible, Poland dared to claim nothing more than freedom and peace. She turned her eyes away from the Habsburgs, from Ivan the Terrible, from Philip II, to point them towards the ancient republics, the Forum Romanum and the three Horaces, to take from these her inspiration for the sublime principles, such as freedom and fraternity. Her achievements, in this respect, preceded by many centuries, those of the other States of Western Europe.

Poland, left by Sigismund Augustus, was a great modern State, comprising almost 900,000 square kilometers, an area tantamount to that of France and England. The population of the state was composed of free citizens who had realised in their institutions,

the purest principles of Roman law and Christian morality.

25. The Elective Kings. *Pacta Conventa*.

After the death of Sigismund-Augustus, the last king of the Jagiello dynasty, the last hereditary sovereign, several candidates put forth their claims to throne. Henry of Valois, brother of Charles IX of France was elected. By the terms of the *Pacta Conventa* (a covenant, a kind of contract between the nation and the sovereign) the king might not choose his successor without the concurrence of the Diet; he might not declare war, increase taxation, and so forth and if he violated the terms of the charter, contravened the laws, liberties and privileges, the nation was fully absolved from its duties of obedience (*pactum de non praestanda oboedientia*) by forming a confederation called "*rokosz*" legal rebellion.¹ At the same time, Henry undertook to place at Poland's disposal, and maintain from his privy purse, a fleet of warships for the defence of the Polish littoral and the mastery of the Baltic. In the future, each new king to solemnly swear to fulfil all these conditions, and others.²

After several months as king, Henry secretly made off; he went to France where he was crowned king

¹ The confederation was called, moreover, in case of foreign invasions in order to face the enemy.

² For example, King Latory and King Sigismund III of Wasa who undertook the same engagements in the *Pacta Conventa*.

after his brother Charles IX's death. The Szlachta then proclaimed the sister of Sigismond-Augustus queen, and married her to Stephen Batory, the Count-Palatine of Transylvania, who thus became king.

26. Batory. Two Aspects of the Fight for the Baltic Littoral.

During *Batory's* reign as the strongest symbol of aristocratic and nationalist democracy was John Zamoyski. Chancellor, member of one of the highest Polish families, a great patriot, and force of enlightenment. An internal reorganisation was brought about under his auspices ; most important were the judicial reforms, an admirable reorganisation of army. Batory founded the University of Vilno in 1578. At this time Ivan the Terrible attempted, once again, to open a path to the Baltic, and he began by invading Courland. Batory saw the danger : by taking Narva, Ivan would have anticipated, by a century and a half, Peter the Great's schemes for making Muscovy a power in Europe. Batory cleared the Moscovites out of the Courland, retook Polock, and even threatened Moscow. When Ivan saw that he had lost, he had the superb inspiration of calling on the Pope for help, offering, in exchange, to convert his empire from the Greek Orthodox to the Roman Catholic church. He knew that the Papal court had never given up the hope of rooting out the Greek schism. The issue seemed to be hot, so Rome struck. A peace was forced upon Batory, and as soon as things had quieted down,

Ivan forgot his promises. The Pope had been made a dupe, but it was at the expense of Poland, for, to strengthen himself against the Moscovites, Batory had to let this exceptional opportunity of settling once and for all the questions of Danzig and East (Ducal) Prussia, go. This fief of Poland was not soon to miss its chance of joining with Brandenburg, and later of breaking away completely from Polish suzerainty.

27. A Polish Philip II.

(a) FOREIGN POLICY The next elected Polish king was the crown prince of Sweden, *Sigismund III Wasa*, nephew of Sigismund Augustus, and so, in spite of the principle of electivity, the nation remained faithful to the glorious dynasty of the Jagiellons, even though it had to be indirectly. Now, Sigismund III, a fanatic and an absolutist, was not a Jagiellon, but a Wasa. He subordinated the prime interests of Poland to those of the Roman Catholic Church, and from the beginning he engaged in a strictly dynastic policy for Sweden, which had disastrous consequences, both at home and abroad, in the eventual history of the country. For him, the Polish throne was but a waiting position where he could mark time during his machinations for the throne of Sweden. In 1601 he provoked the war with Sweden which dragged on until 1629, and which, in spite of the heroism squandered on seemingly splendid victories, as for example Kirchholm near Riga, 1605), ended in a truce, the terms of which took from Poland the greater

part of Livonia and a good number of Prussian ports. The ultimate consequences were moreover, much graver, for by coming to grips with Gustavus Adolphus, one of the greatest military geniuses of history, Sigismund overlooked the fact that East (Ducal) Prussia had joined with the Electorate of Brandenburg (1605), and that his vassal state had shaken off its homage to the extent of giving aid to the Swedes against Poland, soon, despite the resistance of the Diet, Sigismund confirmed the claims of Electors of Brandenburg to the Prussian fief (in 1611) and received at Warsaw, the new capital of Poland, the oath of fealty which the Elector John Sigismund solemnly swore to uphold. And at this time his favorable neutrality to Austria, during the Thirty Years' War, lost Poland the unusual chance of profiting by the cataclysm of Central Europe, to take up a fruitful offensive to the West for the purpose of recovering the rich lands of Silesia; as a consequence, that great settlement of claims, *the Treaty of Westphalia* (1648), took place without Poland, without considering Poland, and in the end, against Poland¹

(b) MOSCOW UNDER THE DOMINATION OF POLAND. (1610-1613). It might have been a different story if, while giving up completely Poland's claims in the West, Sigismund had known how to consolidate his forces in the East; but on this point he was likewise incapable of continuing a sincere national policy for

¹ For among others, the Elector of Brandenburg occupied Western Pomerania

Poland's benefit, by taking advantage of the wonderful circumstances offered him. Thanks to the brilliant victory at Kluszyño, for the second time, in less than thirty years, the road to Moscow lay open to the Polish armies, for the second time—and for the last time—the opportunity was lost: the Poles occupied Moscow, the Boyars proclaimed as tsar Sigismund's son (this was Vladislav, future King of Poland), the people of Moscovy paid homage to "Vladislav, the Great Sovereign" but for religious scruples Sigismund let slip this favourable moment for the union of Poland and Muscovy. And so the Boyars, disappointed and deceived in their expectations, chose Michael Romanov as their tsar. Modern Russia, one of the essential components in the future ruin of Poland was born.

(c) DOMESTIC POLITICS: ABSOLUTISM. Destiny and the fatalism of history has rarely missed a chance of doing Poland some disservice; the throne of Poland had to be occupied by an absolutist sovereign at the precise moment when the nation was getting ready to introduce into its governmental system some decisive adjustments which might have made of it a vital enduring force, and even better, a magnificent instrument in the cause of civilisation and prosperity. When one makes of the Szlachta a scapegoat for all the subsequent national disasters, one is apt to forget that this same Szlachta, in the period of its great power, did not cleave inflexibly to the letter of the constitution which it had just established; on the contrary, it was ready, after having tested for several years the

new regime, to consolidate and amend it. The Chancellor Zamoyski, known as "The Tribune of the People", and his party wished to introduce some reforms relative to the election of the kings, and to perfect the Parliamentary and Legislative systems by substituting the majority vote for the viritim (unanimous) vote which prevailed in the XVIth Century.¹ During Zamoyski's lifetime Sigismund barred all routes to reform, and it was much worse after the Chief Tribune died, when the Szlachta, outraged by this absolutist policy which was contrary to the terms of the charter, considered itself forced to take up arms—in the very name of the law—to defend the constitution violated by the king (pactum de non praestanda obœdientia and "rokosz",—see page 15)

The rebellion was put down. By doing so Sigismund distorted for ever the democratic regime established by public custom and opinion.

(d) THE CONSEQUENCES. Sigismund Wasa was a disastrous king of Poland; his selfish and narrowly dynastic foreign policy only uselessly wasted the heroism expended on it. He was a spendthrift of the nation's energy, at home he bent the political tendency towards demagoguery. The great empire of the Jagiellons, which had contended favourably with the

¹ This was the infamous "*Liberum veto*" which played a fatal rôle in the final history of Poland. In order to remedy this inconvenience in the parliamentary system, the deputies formed a confederation in which all questions were decided by the majority vote.

Habsburgs, he broke out of the chain of Western States, and left it thus isolated between the Hohenzollerns and the Romanovs. It is not surprising that Poland, after the death of such a ruler, entered upon one of the most sombre periods of its history. At first, upheld by its splendid vital force, by its glorious past, by the personal qualities of Vladislav and of his policy which was diametrically opposed to his father's, Poland raised herself once more to the highest point of her power, then, all the accumulated faults bore fruit at the same time; the brother and successor of Vladislav, John Casimir, was left to harvest them.

IV. POLAND ISOLATED.

28. From the Heights to the Depths.

(a) THE CULMINATING EXPANSION TO THE EAST. *Vladislav IV* had scarcely been crowned when he was brought up short by an attack from Moscow. His counter attack was successful. encircled by the Polish forces, the Russian army, on its way to besiege Smolensk, was forced to capitulate and lay its hundred and twelve standards at the feet of the Polish king. *The Treaty of Polanow* (1634), which was meant to establish a perpetual peace between these two countries, was the peak of Poland's territorial expansion to the East: Moscow renounced definitively all her claims to Livonia and to the territories of Severia, Czernihov and Smolensk.¹ Vladislav likewise settled a conflict

¹ Ceded to Poland by the treaty of Dywilno (1619). The surface area of Poland was more than one million square kilometers (625 000 square miles).

with Turkey and the Polono-Swedish differences, concluding a 26-year peace with Gustavus Adolphus

(b) FACING THE BALTIC. The Swedish garrisons were withdrawn from West (Royal) Prussia, and Polish Livonia was restored to Poland. In this way Vladislav consolidated his position in the Baltic. He inherited two districts in East Pomerania (Lembork and Bytow) upon the death of the duke of the Stettin dynasty. His first wife, the Archduchess Cecilia Renata, brought him a part of Silesia (the lands of Ratibor and Opole) as a dowry. The Republic's sun shone at its zenith. As part of his Baltic policy Vladislav made a serious attempt to create a fleet, but at this moment he was forced to contend with the bloody riots of the Cossacks. These men of Ruthenian origin were established in the wide spaces of the Ukraine. Sigismund had left a situation there which called for all Vladislav's attention. The Cossack question had taken on a triple aspect: political, religious and social. After years of turmoil, a man appeared, capable of bringing to a head all these questions at once, a man of savage energy, of unlimited ambition: Chmielnicki. In an instant all the Ukraine was in revolt.

(c) POLAND INVADED. *John Casimir*, brother and successor to Vladislav, was destined to bear the brunt of all the evils. The partial successes of Chmielnicki provoked a period of general confusion. It was under these circumstances that a certain Sicinski, a deputy from Upita (Lithuania) made use,

for the first time, of the *Liberum veto* (Imielnicki invited the Tsar Alexis Romanov to proclaim himself protector of the Ukraine (1654). The rising tide of Moscow, pent up for a time by Vladislav and his predecessors, broke in a wave along all the eastern borders. The Ukraine and Lithuania were submerged. Soon the scourge of a Swedish invasion was to be added to all this. Poland was saved by the strength of her heroic people, but the effects of this Swedish war, which was due to the house of Wasa, were to show themselves as most baneful to the country. In 1605, East Prussia joined with Brandenburg, in 1657, by the treaty of Wehlau, ratified three years later by the treaty of Oliva, the house of Hohenzollern threw off Polish suzerainty. Such were the results of famous "Fuchspolitik" (fox-like cunning) of the Hohenzollern. Forty years passed and another monarch of foreign origin came to the throne, Augustus II of Saxony, the king-traitor, completely disregarded Poland's national interests when he hastened to be first to offer his congratulations to another Hohenzollern on his coronation, with the title of king in Prussia ("in Preussen" not "of Prussia"-1701). Thus it was that the dynastic intrigues, into which the House of Wasa had dragged Poland, ended in confusion and defeat. the Baltic territories were lost. (John Sobieski tried once again to retake Prussia in 1678-1679, but was hindered by the war with Turkey.) After his anticonstitutional attempt to designate a successor was checkmated—this was the battle between the Duc

d'Enghien and the Habsburg—Casimir abdicated. He left things in the same mess as his father had, he forced the people to live under a continual fear of the foreign machinations which were going on, to put an end to the independence, the national interests and the freedom of Poland. What had Poland gained if one of her heroes, Czarniecki, he who with his cavalry had swum across a strait in Denmark, offered to the Diet of 1661 one hundred and thirty standards won from the Swedes, and a hundred and seventy-five taken from the Russians?

29. The Return to Polish Princes. Sobieski.

(a) THE ATTEMPT TO RECOVER PRUSSIA. The Ukraine which in 1657 had been given a federal system of government similar to Lithuania's, now traitorously took up arms and invited help from Turkey. Mahomet IV invaded Podolia and Red Ruthenia; but once again the fire of Patriotism saved Poland. The Grand-Hetman Sobieski vanquished the Turks at Chocim (1673). Covered with glory, *Sobieski* was triumphantly elected king. He had scarcely mounted the throne when he found himself in a dilemma. the Baltic or the Black Sea? Counting on the agreement with France (1675), then at war against the Habsburg and the Hohenzollerns, and on a pact with Sweden, Sobieski planned to correct the errors of his predecessors and retake Ducal (East) Prussia from the Elector of Brandenburg. But soon Louis XIV joined with the Elector and broke off the Franco-Polish Alliance,

provoking a complete revision of European politics

(b) VIENNA. Thus Sobieski had to conclude an alliance with Austria. When the Turks besieged Vienna and the Emperor heroically took to his heels, Sobieski came to the rescue at the head of the Polish cavalry and by his victory saved Vienna (1683). Afterwards he took back Hungary from the Turks, and handed it over to the Emperor. In this way the Empire of the Habsburgs was saved and Christian Europe spared an invasion. Europe honoured these victories with high praise, but that was all. And so Poland, charged with laurel wreaths, was left more alone than ever. . . It was another deadly consequence of the Wasa's disastrous policy.

V. THE DECLINE.

30. From Democracy to Demagoguery.

It can clearly be seen from the above that Sigismund's autocratic policies had completely destroyed the equilibrium of the public life of the country. The gentry (*Szlachta*), jealous of its prerogatives, but ruined by the continual wars and invasions, was ripe for subservience. It shook itself free from an arbitrary royal power only to fall under the domination of a few princely families. These magnates, whose power had been kept down and curtailed for many years, reappeared on the scene and rapidly gained control, for they knew how to take advantage of the preponderant confusion. Under their sway the mass of the gentry,

although continuing to represent the true national opinion and the vital force of the country, became but an unwilling implement in the hands of a selfish oligarchy, made up of rival families, whose intrigues only furnished Poland's enemies with excellent excuses to to intervene and meddle with her internal affairs.

31. The Kings Imposed on Poland.

(a) THE SAXONS. It is impossible to describe Poland of the XVIIth Century, or to make a just appraisal of the political life of the country, without continually bearing in mind the action of the foreign powers, which, seen or invisible, always intervened to nullify, to dupe, to pervert, and to corrupt. The election of *Augustus II* called "The Strong" (Frederic Augustus, Elector of Saxony) must be considered with these ideas in mind, for he was imposed on Poland by Russian armed forces against the will of the majority of the Polish gentry, who had elected as king, the French Prince de Conti, nephew of the Grand Condé. Augustus II was, like Sigismund III of Wasa, a foreigner profoundly ignorant of the spirit of Poland; he was interested not in saving his people, but in making use of them, he was an absolutist monarch, ambitious, merely interested in his dynastic affairs. All that the Wasa did, the Saxon was going to repeat, but this time, circumstances contrived to make the evil irrevocable

(b) DISASTROUS ALLIANCE. Indifferent to the real needs of the country, the Saxon used Moscow to bolster up his own position. He made an alliance with Peter

the Great. When Peter took up arms against Charles XII, the Polish Diet declared for neutrality. That did not matter to the Saxon. He provoked a war with Sweden. Charles beat the Russians and the Saxons, and invaded Lithuania. Poland found herself caught between a dangerous ally, and a terrible adversary.

(c) BIRTH OF THE KINGDOM OF PRUSSIA. While Poland was, in spite of herself, thrown into still another fruitless enterprise, the Elector of Brandenburg, profited once more by her difficulties to complete his arrangements for being crowned King (at Königsberg—1701). The Diet demanded that Augustus should protest against this coronation, and put an end to hostilities against the Swedes. In vain, and too late. Augustus hastened to offer his congratulations to the Hohenzollern, his fellow Elector. Charles of Sweden advanced to occupy Poland, but to the country's stupefaction, the Diet learned that its traitor-king was quite simply negotiating with the King of Sweden to dismember Poland. Fortunately, Charles was more honest. He brought forward, as candidate, the Count-Palatine of Poznań, *Stanisław Leszczyński* (the future father-in-law of Louis XV of France) who was crowned. Meanwhile, Augustus went to Berlin where he set to work actively on plans for a partition of Poland between Russia, Prussia, Denmark and Saxony. Charles went into Saxony and forced Augustus to renounce the Polish throne.

(d) RUSSIA AT THE BALTIC. This infamous king,

thus forced Poland to aid Russia in the conquest of the Baltic, for the control of which they had, in the past, disputed so long and gloriously. He did so, to negotiate with this enemy of Poland, as with her other hereditary enemy, the Elector of Brandenburg, now King of Prussia, thanks to his good services—only to bring about the dismemberment of his own country, Poland. Petersburg was founded during this time. Several years later, in 1721, Muscovy became “the Empire of all the Russias”, soon to become one of the “joint powers of the partition”

(e) **POLTAVA AND ITS RESULTS** Charles wanted to put an end to Peter the Great’s ambitions. He descended upon the Ukraine. History has recorded the fate of this rash act of the heroic Swedish King. Poltava (1709) was for Poland an immense disaster. Augustus took back his crown, Leszczyński left the country. Augustus paid for these services (rendered to him personally) by ceding Livonia to Peter,—and from that time Russia became the arbiter in the North.

(f) **PACT OF BERLIN** At Nystadt (1721) the Tsar agreed with the King of Prussia to solve all the Polish questions, and soon, in 1732, the *Pact of Berlin* was concluded between Russia, Prussia and Austria, and this fearful Alliance took upon itself to draw up the last will and testament for Poland: they agreed (1) to act together in all affairs pertaining to Poland, (2) to maintain its state of weakness by every means whatsoever, above all by forbidding any sort of reform.

Poland was condemned. A Fataality gripped the country. For a little more than half a century the country was to fight, struggling and in convulsions, as the noose was pulled tighter. Through all errors and absurdities, one always felt the soul of a great nation fighting against a terrible destiny, and which, by force of her heroism, stubbornly refused to submit.

32 Poland Abandoned.

After the death of Augustus II, this totally bad traitor king, it seemed that Leszczyński's election would encounter no resistance. The Diet convened for the purpose of the election refused to consider any foreign candidates. This was another of the endless repeated vain efforts to free the country from the yoke of the neighbouring powers. When Leszczyński arrived, he was met by 70 000 Russian soldiers, so he retired to Danzig, while waiting for the aid promised him by his son-in-law, Louis XV of France. The count de Plélo and Lamoignon de la Peyrouse landed with 2,000 men, just enough to make clear that Louis was abandoning Poland to her fate. Between the accession of *Augustus III*, son of Augustus II, and his death, thirty sad years were to pass with only a few spasms. While the Austrian War of succession shook Europe, while the Habsburgs and Hohenzollerns quarrelled over Silesia, this ancient Polish province, chief jewel of the crown of the Piasts, Poland, crushed and exhausted, did not stir.

VI. RUIN: THE PARTITIONS.

33. The Last King.

(a) IN THE GRIP OF RUSSIA. In 1764 *Stanislav Augustus Pomatowski*, nephew of the Czartoryski, a then all-powerful noble family, simply called "the Family", a man favoured by Catherine the Great of Russia, was elected king. Clever, cultivated, sympathetic to reforms, the only thing he lacked was character: he was unable to stand up against the Russian influence. Scarcely had the patriots begun their reforms, before Russia intervened. the foremost senators and bishops were seized and exiled to Russia, the independent deputies were arrested, and Russian troops were allowed to pillage the properties of any landowner who showed resistance. Catherine the Great was proclaimed "guarantor and protectress of Polish liberties" (!) Then all Poland arose. A part of the gentry formed the *Confederation of Bar* (1768). These patriots fought the Russians actively. A terrible massacre of 200,000 Poles in the Ukraine, by the peasants at the instigation of the Russians, caused the Confederates to beg Europe to help them. Europe could not bother to trouble itself over Poland's griefs, but Russia's progress alarmed it. Austria offered a little discreet aid to the insurgents. France intervened with considerable energy: on Choiseul's initiative the Sublime Porte presented to Russia an ultimatum, asking her to evacuate Poland and thus proclaiming Turkey as champion of Polish independ-

ence,¹ and, when this ultimatum was rejected, declared war. France's intervention was vigorous, but a good half century too late, and could not make up for the errors which were to come. The war turned out badly for Turkey. Russia took possession of Moldavia, Valachia, and the Crimea.

(b) **FIRST PARTITION** When Austria found that her Danubian provinces were threatened, she joined with Frederic II in a decision to appease Russia's insatiable appetite with Polish lands. In 1772, these three powers signed an agreement of partition. Poland lost two fifths of her territory. Prussia got Polish Pomerania (called Royal Prussia) with the exception of Thorn and Danzig; at last her dream came true: the territories of East Prussia and Brandenburg were joined together. Austria took all of Galicia and a part of Podolia. Russia swallowed all of Lithuania beyond the Dnieper and the Duna. All this "in the name of the Most Holy Trinity" and "in fear of the total dissolution of the Polish State".² Europe placidly looked on. At Versailles, perhaps, there was a little

¹ "Russia has dared to wipe out the liberties of Poland. Russia has massacred the Poles who would not recognise the king whom Russia had imposed upon them. Russia has devastated their domains and possessions."

² After the first partition the French philosopher d'Alembert came to see Frederic and spoke to him frankly about this violation of the rights of peoples and sovereigns. Frederic said to him. "The Empress Catherine and I are two brigands, but that devote of an empress-queen (Maria Theresia) how has she arranged the matter with her confessor?"

emotion, but nowhere else. The ancient régime of France, in its downfall, carried Poland along with it, into the abyss

(c) A MAGNIFICENT EFFORT OF REGENERATION. THE FIRST CONSTITUTION EVER GIVEN TO A NATION ON THE CONTINENT OF EUROPE. The history of the Country between the first partition and the second (1772-1793) presents one of the most magnificent examples of national regeneration ever brought about by any people. The country worked at fever pitch to revive in all its branches, economic, social, political and intellectual, new life. It was an immense effort to get away from the nightmare of yesterday. The Government set up a *Commission of Education* (1773) which was, in its modest way, *the first Ministry of Public Instruction known to history*. A strong party of the middle gentry representing the reserves of the best forces in the country, was constituted. Out of this party, after the intellectual and economic regeneration, was to come the great political reformation. *The Constitution of the 3rd of May, 1791*, passed by the Diet, known as "*the Four years Parliament*" (1788-1792), that Constituant Assembly of Poland, which might have saved the country, if "the Most Holy Trinity" had allowed it. This new charter was made up of eleven articles. The opening words expressed the democratic doctrine that "all powers of government emanate from the people." A hereditary monarchy was substituted for the elective system. The executive power of the State was strengthened

and separated from legislation. The majority vote replaced the vote virutum (unanimous) : the destructive *Liberum veto* was abolished. The Confederations were suppressed. The bourgeoisie was assured liberal rights. The peasants were given the protection of the law. Religious freedom was confirmed. Every twenty-five years a special Diet should meet to revise the Constitutional vices, which the foreign powers had maintained and cultivated, were thus eliminated by the nation itself, in full liberty and without violence. The new Charter was a golden mean between Polish traditions and the doctrines of the contemporary French revolution, and was the first Constitution ever freely given to a people by itself on the continent.¹

(d) SECOND PARTITION AND INSURRECTION OF 1794. Poland from the XVIth Century had paid a cruel price for the precocious advancement of her civilisation. Now she was to pay with her very existence for unwisely hoisting the standard of liberty in the confines of Europe. All the powers accepted the Constitution but Russia, who refused it. Catherine the Great invaded the territories of the Republic. Prince Joseph Poniatowski, a future Marshal of France, and Kosciuszko, who became a general in the American army and Aide-de-Camp to Washington, led a heroic resistance. At that moment Russia, Prussia, and Austria were engaged in war with France, and

¹ The new French Constitution of 1791 was only definitively passed on September 3, and was not sanctioned by Louis XVI until September 14

they were being defeated. Why not make Poland compensate for their losses? It was a Prussian idea, and in 1793 Russia and Austria readily agreed. Russia took possession of the southern provinces; Prussia got Great Poland (Poznanio) as well as Thorn and Danzig. Their proclamation of justification stated, that it was necessary to wipe out Poland, "the influence of the horrible tendencies of the spirit of the French demagogues, which had extended its domination to the Polish Republic, and so menaced the peace of Europe." Once more, the nation as a whole, set to work and in a short time a widespread underground activity was organised with Kosciuszko as head. After having failed to obtain help from the Paris revolutionaries, Kosciuszko determined that his revolt must stand on its own feet. He joined forces with the makers of the Constitution of the 3rd of May. The insurrection broke out in 1794; it included not only the bourgeoisie but the mass of peasants ¹ After a battle in which the troops of Frederic-William II, brought from the French battle front, had traitorously attacked the Polish dictator, and after the vigorous resistance of Warsaw before the Prussian armies, the revolution spread over Great Poland, and even into Courland. Kosciuszko resisted both Russia and Prussia

¹ In his celebrated *Manifest of Polaniec* (the 7th of May, 1794) Kosciuszko proclaimed the peasants free, as were all the other citizens, and that the earth they cultivated belonged to them, he created special tribunals exclusively empowered to protect the agricultural workers against any abuse from the nobles. Thus the great work of the Constitution of the 3rd of May was completed.

for six months. Then Austria closed the enemy ring around Poland, Kosciuszko, wounded, was taken prisoner at Maciejowice. Suvorov marched on Warsaw, and after a terrible general massacre of a suburb of Praga, took the capital by assault. That was the death blow.

(e) THIRD PARTITION. The three accomplices agreed to the ruin of Poland by dividing the remains of her national territory. Catherine the Great appropriated as well the National Archives, and the enormous Zaluski library, the king of Prussia satisfied himself by pocketing the royal treasures and even the diamonds from the crown.

(f) CONSEQUENCES. It is useless to stress the character of these partitions from the simple point of view of its general political morality. None of history's ignominies had ever reached so low a point. This is a symbol, the essence of XVIIIth Century political dishonesty. What was the effect of this destruction of Poland? France of the Revolution was saved, but the balance of power in Europe was immediately destroyed. The partitions showed clearer than ever that Poland, by the sole fact of her existence, had given France a measureless support. If France lost her supremacy on the continent, if Germania was able to set up a domination in Central Europe, it was because Poland had been torn up, and because this destruction was followed by a redistribution of power, dangerous to the peace of the European people. This

crime, enacted amidst universal indifference, brought on an aftermath of insolvable problems made specially formidable because, after having lost her freedom, Poland refused to abandon her soul

VII. THE FIGHT FOR LIBERATION. DECEPTIONS.

34. The Legions

Once they had the mastery of Poland each of the three powers made haste to set up its own particular brand of domination. The indomitable patriots and a great part of the army had gone into voluntary exile. They understood that Poland, from this time on, could not rise, without foreign co-operation, and it seemed to them, that, the troubles of Europe favoured getting to work on a large scale. They decided to throw in the lot of their country with the French Revolution, and particularly they counted on Napoleon Bonaparte. In 1796 General Dombrowski placed before the Supreme Executive Council of France (the Directory) a memorandum relative to the creation of a Polish army, in association with the armies of the Republic. The proposal met with a luke-warm reception, but Bonaparte, looking farther into the future, welcomed the Poles with enthusiasm. Thus began a veritable crucifixion by deception. Prodigal with their blood, the Poles fought for what was never given them. They piled up great deeds, they spent themselves in sacrifices: they were paid in fine words. They used them, but they got in the way. For several years the Legions

played a glorious part in Bonaparte's operations in 1797 they took Verona; in 1798 they entered the Eternal City; in 1799 they occupied Naples and fought in Lombardy against Suvorow, in 1800 they took Mantua and played an important part in the victory of Hohenlinden. Results by the *treaty of Luneville* (1801) France agreed not to aid the Poles against "their master", Russia and Austria. If by the treaty of Campo-Formio the Poles had been abandoned, Luneville was more than a deception. What was left of the Legions was embarked for San-Domingo to suppress a revolt among the negroes. On that island most of the Poles perished of yellow fever. The great prestige which France had enjoyed for a time in Poland was now profoundly shaken.

35. Between Alexander and Napoleon

The Mirage of Restored Poland : The Duchy of Warsaw.

But as the Legions fought on, new hope sprang up. While Prussia and Austria forced Germanisation on their Polish territories, Alexander I heaped kindnesses upon his new subjects. Prince Czartoryski became a great friend, and Foreign Minister of the Tsar. He conceived the plan of breaking Prussia by pushing the Russian frontier as far as Danzig; Poland was made an independent kingdom linked to Russia only by a personal union. Alexander went to Pulaway, the residence of the Czartoryskis; here he held a con-

ference with representatives from Prussian and Austrian Poland. Russia's evil genius in guiding Poland's affairs, the House of Hohenzollern, had never seen their accomplice of the north so near parting company with them. But suddenly all negotiations were broken off. Alexander journeyed to Potsdam to swear eternal friendship with Prussia on the tomb of Frederick the Great. Poland had been duped by Russia as she had been deceived by France. Then came the battle of Iena followed by a rebellion among Prussia's Polish subjects. Next came the *Treaty of Tilsitt* (1807), a compromise, which led to the creation of *the Duchy of Warsaw*, consisting of sections out of Russian Poland from Poznan and from West Prussia, with the cities of Warsaw, Poznan and Torun (Thorn). Danzig, with about a hundred square kilometers of land, was declared a Free City, under the joint protection of the King of Prussia, and the King of Saxony, in his capacity as Duke of Warsaw. The Duchy was given the Code Napoleon (which has been flourishing in central Poland till the present time). Napoleon knew how to exploit this mirage of a restored Poland. The Duchy raised an army of 50 000 men. A regiment of light horse served in Napoleon's guard, and the Emperor made his brother, Jerome, King of Westphalia, the gift of a " Legion of the Vistula ". Three picked regiments were sent to Spain where they took part in the siege of Saragossa. The Light horse of the Guards opened the road to Madrid, for Napoleon, with their celebrated charge in the defile of Somo-Sierra. The Drama of the Legions

was to recommence. The first act ended with Lunéville. The second was to end with Leipzig. In 1809 Austria invaded the Duchy. Prince Joseph Poniatowski met the enemy at Raszyn (near Warsaw) occupied Galicia and entered Cracow. The Duchy was enlarged by all of Western Galicia. In 1811 Napoleon spread rumours throughout all Poland of his plans for a total restoration. The country feverishly took up arms. More than 75 000 Polish soldiers participated in the campaign of 1812 which Napoleon called "the second Polish war". They were as brave as "lions" (as the Emperor said) at Smolensk and Borodino. They covered the retreat to Beresina and saved the artillery of the Grande Armée. Napoleon, under the protection of the Polish lancers, got back to Paris by way of Vilno and Warsaw. By February, 1813, all Poland was in Russian hands. Following the terms of the agreements of Reichenbach and Toeplitz, Russia, Prussia and Austria concerted their Polish policies in order to liquidate the Duchy (refrain taken from the 1732 Pact of Berlin). Poniatowski and Dombrowski stood by Napoleon. In 1813 more than 40.000 Poles were still fighting under the standards of the Imperial Eagles at Bautzen, at Reichenbach, at Dresden and at Leipzig where Poniatowski, named Marshal of France, on the field of battle, was charged with covering the retreat. He perished, swimming with his horse across the Elster river, "entrusting to God Himself the honour of the Poles". The remnant of the army kept on fighting to the end

for their hopeless cause . at Bienne, at Champaubert, at Montmirail, at Laon, at Craonne, and at Berry-au-Bac. With Moncey, they defended the barrier of Cluchy. They went to say farewell to Napoleon at Fontainebleau . A squadron of the Polish cavalry, a hundred strong, commanded by Jerzmanowski, accompanied Napoleon to Elba.

36. The Congress of Vienna. The Fourth Partition of Poland.

Among the partners . Alexander, Castlereagh, Talleyrand, Metternich, Hardenberg, there was no man representing either the Duchy of Warsaw, or Turkey. Russia opened the bidding. There was nothing to hope for from Prussia and Austria. As for England and France, by the very nature of the situation the principle of nationalities in their eyes, had much less interest than that of the famous continental balance of power. They were also resolutely hostile to the creation of a Poland with a constitutional government under the sceptre of the Tsars. Viscount Castlereagh expounded the views of the British Government in a Note which stated that *England had not given up hoping for an independent Poland, but as Russia appeared to be immovable, England was forced to be contented with the assurance of the happiness of the Polish Nation by means of " a system of administration which would be at the same time conciliatory and in with the genius of the people "*¹

¹ January 12, 1815.

free debate among equals ; it was a conference of conquerors, a commission for the settling of claims. Misfortune wished that the crime of the partitions of Poland be brought before the High Court at an epoch, so to say, mixed, where these two fundamental and contradictory conceptions clashed, that of the dynastic policy and that of the principle of nationalities which were to soon appear as the keystone of international life, but which, at that moment, still lacked strength and tradition. In this haste for liquidation Poland lost her political existence. The decisions of the Congress concerning Poland had to be guaranteed by the signatures of eight powers: Russia, Austria, England, Prussia, France, Sweden, Spain and Portugal. Not only did they condone and ratify the threefold spoliation of Poland in the XVIIIth Century, but they effected the fourth partition which chopped Poland into four pieces: *the Kingdom of Poland* (tied to Russia by the person of the King who was Tsar of Russia, and by the Polish constitution), *the Grand-Duchy of Poznan* (attached to Prussia), *the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria* (attached to Austria) and *the Republic of Cracow*. The stipulations guaranteeing Polish nationality were so vague that any interpretation was possible, they had no judicial value, and allowed all three governments to treat the Polish people as they considered best. The drama of the Poles in Prussia is contained as a germ in the first article of the Final Act of the Congress of Vienna. And as for Russia the act of trying to link a constitu-

tional Kingdom to an absolute autocracy, was in itself a monstrosity, with no likelihood of life or duration, and which intrinsically contained a source of future misery for the Kingdom. Russia, Prussia and Austria signed their pact of "Holy Alliance " At that point Europe began to understand the direction taken by the work which had just been accomplished at Vienna . Poland and liberalism stood on one side, spoilers and reaction stood on the other , the contrast struck the eye. Poland did not give up her right What Napoleon had not done, Poland hoped the Nations would do. This new crusade, Poland would follow up to Napoleon III Broken in 1830 and again in 1863, she was definitely buried in 1870. There was nothing left to do but work, waiting for better times

VII. DISMEMBERED POLAND AND THE NATIONS

37. The Poles and Russia. The "Congress Kingdom." The Insurrection of 1830.

The constitution of the Kingdom, granted by Alexander, in his capacity as King of Poland, was, for this period, one of the most liberal in Europe. Furthermore, Alexander engaged himself before the Diet to join Lithuania and Ruthenia to the Kingdom. The regime was at first liberal, but, with time, its character became more and more reactionary ; this fostered the growth of secret political organisations among the patriotic elements. After having attended the various

Congresses of the Holy Alliance (Karlsbad, Opawa, Laybach and Verona, 1819-1822) Alexander developed a morbid fear of revolutionary plots. He began to consider the constitution as a regal gift, and renounced all idea—if he ever had sincerely harboured any—of attaching any part, whatsoever, of Lithuania and Ruthenia, to the Kingdom. Following the accession of Nicholas I this reaction assumed a really violent force. Despite the constitution a police system was organised, which exasperated the Poles. In 1830 the government's decision to dispatch the Polish army as vanguard against the revolutionaries of France and Belgium, proved to be the final straw: an insurrection broke out. General Chlopicki, an old veteran of the Legions, was named dictator. The Russian troops were everywhere forced to lay down their arms. A permanent government was constituted. The Diet recognised the insurrection as national and issued a manifest, addressed to all nations, and appealing to the guarantees of the Treaty of Vienna concerning Poland. No one wanted the risk of reopening the debate of liberty against autocracy. Europe wanted to have nothing to do with the situation, either as judge or as witness, she looked in the other direction. In spite of the inequality of forces, the struggle of the little Kingdom against the gigantic Empire lasted eleven months. The uprising spread to Lithuania and the Ukraine. Although brilliant victories were won, courage and heroism had to give way before the sheer weight of numbers; Poland was forced to lay

down her arms. This Polish revolution formed a corollary to the July Revolution in Paris, and the insurrection in Belgium. It spared France a new war and allowed Belgium to regain her liberty. By abandoning Poland, European diplomacy had cast widespread the seeds of misery which Poland had foretold. It was a policy, which not only buttressed the thrones of the Holy Alliance, but also created a state of affairs which quite naturally brought on the war of 1870, and the hegemony of the German Empire.

38. "The Great Emigration."

"The Springtide of Nations."

The finest men of the nation and of the army chose the road to exile, and their going from Poland to Western Europe, was called "The Great Emigration." This exodus began a social, literary and scientific movement of far-reaching importance to Poland. The history of the liberal and democratic movement of the XIXth Century has assigned these Polish exiles a place among the most eminent. They worked not only for their own country during the Polish uprisings of 1846, 1848 and 1863, by being faithful to their traditions, they actively shared the struggles of the other peoples, fighting despotism and foreign domination, living up to their famous motto: *For your freedom and ours.* Earlier, towards the end of the XVIIIth Century, the Polish hero, Kosciuszko, Brigadier General and Aide-de-camp to Washington, had fought together with

General Pulaski¹ in the American War of Independence. After 1830 two Polish generals, Skrzynecki and Kruszewski, organised the new Belgian army. The great national poet Mickiewicz who became in 1840 a professor of Slavonic literature at the College de France at the Sorbonne, formed legions in 1848 to fight for the freedom of Italy. In the Hungarian insurrection of 1849 the two Polish generals, Bem and Dembinski, took their places among the most important leaders. Mieroslawski, who had led the Sicilian rebellion against the Bourbons, and who was the military commander of the Polish uprising of 1846 (as he was to be again in 1863), headed the revolutionary army of Baden. Mickiewicz and Czajkowski (Sadyk Pasha) organised in 1855 anti-Russian Polish volunteer forces in Turkey, to fight beside the French and English in the Crimea. French diplomacy of the Revolution of 1848 (Lamartine) attempted to re-establish Poland with Germany's co-operation, but this was a fantastic absurdity, as young Bismarck made clear in a speech before the Prussian Landtag. The insurrection in the Grand-Duchy (Poznan) was put down with an iron hand. The famous *Parliament of Frankfort* came next. A very large majority voted against the motion of a little group of liberal deputies from the South, to call together, with the agreement of France and England, a European Congress, convened for the express purpose of reconstructing Poland. Therefore, this dawn of the rights of Nations proved to be a false dawn.

¹ Who was one of the eminent Confederates of Bar

39. The Insurrection of 1863 and Its Consequences.

To chastise the Poles after the insurrection of 1830, the Tsar abolished the constitutional government of the Kingdom. Reaction and persecutions began. The Russians ordered the closing of a series of institutions and schools including the Universities of Warsaw, and Vilno (founded by Batory in 1578), and broke up the union of the Roman and Greek Churches (Union of Brzesc, 1595) by enforcing persecutions on those who resisted. The successor of Nicholas I, Alexander II, had the reputation of being liberal. But at the *Congress of Paris* (1856) Russia, though conquered, refused her conquerors the right of officially reopening, not only the Polish question, but even the manner of execution of the international obligations undertaken by the Tsar in 1815. France and England agreed, for "*it was found prudent not to bring this question before the Congress.*" The first phase of Napoleon III's Polish policy thus ended in complete capitulation. The principle reason for this check was that the three co-partitioners, anxious about their joint interests in Poland, had abstained from engaging in the conflict or from taking up arms one against the other. However, Alexander II had agreed to look after the welfare of his Polish subjects. The new Tsar interpreted these promises curiously: he refused to recognise a separate Polish nationality and tried to destroy their culture and traditions; he forced Russian culture and education upon them, and glorified the despotism of his father, Nicholas I. A rebellion broke out hoping for help

from the Western powers, but in vain. While Bismarck was arranging the famous Alvensleben agreement with Russia for the purpose of crushing this rebellion, the plan of Napoleon III (known as "*the plan of the Tuileries*") broke down because of the attitude of Lord Russell, who rendered it impossible for the Polish question to be considered in the international scheme. Face to face with Russia the insurrection was condemned. It was drowned in the blood of Berg and Muraviev-the-Hangman. After 1830 the Kingdom had lost its constitution, after 1863 it had lost even its name. It was incorporated into the Russian Empire as "Privislinskij Kraj" (The Province of the Vistula). There followed wholesale deportations to Siberia (more than 30 000 patriots), confiscations, religious persecutions, the suppression of all teaching in Polish, and utter Russification. In the madness during the 1905 Revolution, Russia had a fit of sincerity "*The attempt to Russify and denationalise a people which, throughout long ages, had lived an independent life and which for years had been absorbing Western European civilisation, which had created from that civilisation a true individuality, and had kept intact its own language and literature, is a task not to be realised*", said the ukase of the 10th June, 1905. But the new reactionary regime did not hesitate to withdraw the few concessions made in the revolutionary period, and the whole thing began once again. At the moment, when the great European cataclysm of 1914 broke out, Russia seemed far from any revision of her Polish policy. Powerless to absorb

the ancient Kingdom, Russia called upon the help of Pan-Germania. If the tide of events had not been so brusquely interrupted, there were indications that she had found the supreme method of finally reducing the spirit of this nation, against which, for a century, the brute strength of a vast empire had vainly spent itself!

40. The Poles and Prussia Bismarck. The Kulturkampf.

After the insurrection of 1830, which however had not troubled the peace of the Grand-Duchy attached to Germany, Prussian Poland underwent the first assaults of Germanisation. The post of Lieutenant General held by Prince Radziwill (who was married to a Hohenzollern) was suppressed, Governor Flottwell inaugurated an anti-Polish policy. The Poles were excluded from the local government and from public administration, and the teaching of the Polish language was forbidden, funds for buying up the lands held by the Poles, were set aside. After a short breathing spell the reaction ran riot. Prussia knew well how to exploit the results of the Congress of Paris. After Sadowa (1866) the Prussian Landtag, inspired by Bismarck, voted to incorporate the Grand-Duchy of Pozan with West Prussia (Polish Pomerania). In vain the Polish deputies protested, invoking the arrangements made by the Congress of Vienna; Europe remained totally indifferent. After the Franco-Prussian War the first Reichstag of the new German Empire rejected the motion of the Polish deputies, and

sanctioned, by majority vote, the official and definitive violation of the guarantees of the Treaty of Vienna. The powers of Europe remained silent. Reduced to the state of simple subjects of the German Empire, without any sort of international guarantee, the Poles were now forced to submit to the heavy assaults of triumphant Germania. It was not slow in coming. Bismarck inaugurated, in 1872, the *Kulturkampf*. In 1886 he got the Reichstag to vote the *Colonisation Law* with a credit of 100 million gold marks destined to endow the *Commission for Colonisation*, the object of which was for the purchase of Polish land and for the settlement of German peasants and workmen. Bismarck said at the time in the Reichstag, "*Never will we consent to the re-establishing of Poland*". The funds at the service of the Commission were soon raised to 550 million. In 1894, the famous anti-Polish league, the *Ostmark-Verein*, was constituted in Poznan. The Polish language was strictly excluded from the schools, and the use of it was forbidden. Bismarck's successor, Bilow, was not ashamed to say publicly (in 1902), "*We are fighting against the entire Polish nation*." In 1904, the Prussian Government enacted a *special law*, forbidding the foundation of any new Polish settlements on any small holdings, proceeding from the the breaking up of the estates of the great Polish landowners. A *Law of Expropriation* was passed in 1908 for the purpose of forcibly buying up all Polish properties in order to hand them over to German settlers. All the Prussian budgets showed a

continual increase of the appropriated credits for the work of Germanisation. In 1914, over 1 000 000 000 gold marks of State credits had been spent to finance this conquest of Polish land.

Bismarck and Bilow inflicted great material losses on the Poles, but neither the one nor the other succeeded in vanquishing them. On the contrary, the Kulturkampf only helped to develop that democratic spirit as well as national and social cohesion, characteristic of what was the Western Poland.

41 The Poles and Austria.

Only in the Austro-Hungarian Empire were the Poles able to obtain certain rights, and the possibility of developing a culture conformable to their national character. This happened when the changes and reforms of 1867 were introduced throughout the Dual Monarchy. The Poles were given autonomy; the administration of Galicia was placed in the hands of Polish functionaries, a minister was appointed for Galicia; and here Polish was declared the official language. Three times Polish statesmen headed the Cabinet (Counts Goluchowski, Potocki and Badeni), and numerous Polish ministers occupied governmental posts. However, the Polish statesmen met with a certain lack of good will in Vienna.

42. Europe and Poland.

On the eve of the great European cataclysm of 1914, even in the liberal centres of Europe, the Polonophil

traditions had been abandoned, for a long time. Europe had become totally indifferent to what might be going on in Warsaw, Cracov or Poznan. Poland was forgotten by Cabinets and nations alike. But she was alive, and fighting, and resisting. She was waiting.

IX THE WORLD WAR 1914-1918.

THE STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE

43. Poland and the Powers at War

During the Great War, Poland still formed the axis of all the political combinations of the three partitioners. In the beginning, the mutual interests of Germany and Russia, in the Polish question, kept the Russians from undertaking any direct offensive against the territory of the Reich. The great objective of the Russian offensive was Lvov, Galicia (Austrian Poland). On the 14th of August, 1914, Grand Duke Nicholas, the Russian Commander-in-Chief, issued a Proclamation announcing the reunion of Polish territories under the sceptre of the Tsar. The following dates mark the principal stages of the fight of the Polish Nation to recover her independence. Juxtaposed, they bring to light all the contradictory elements of this struggle, as well as the hardships that the Poles had to overcome.

1914

August 6.

The first of the Polish Legion formations march into the Kingdom to fight the Russians. (Formations

made up of men fighting for independence organised in Galicia and led by *Pilsudski*.

November 5 The Central European Empires proclaim Poland an independent state with a hereditary monarchy, and a constitutional government

November 20. *Paderewski*, in conjunction with the Polish National Committee of Chicago, publishes a manifesto in which he protests against the attempt of the Central Empires to form a Polish army. It closed with these words "Poland must be free, independent, and restored as a unity." Its echo :

January 22. President Wilson publishes his famous message. (So for the first time four million Polish-Americans exercise their influence on the future of the universe.)

1917

January 14. The Provisional Council of State is created at Warsaw.

March 25. The President of the Polish National Committee in Paris, *Dmowski*, hands Balfour a memorandum addressed to the Allied Powers, asking for the creation of an independent

Poland, comprising all the national territory.

- March 30. The Provisional Republican Government of Russia (Prince Lvov) recognised the independence of Poland.
- June 4 A French governmental decree lays the foundation for a regular Polish Army in France.
- June 8-22. The Congress of Polish soldiers in Petrograd lays the foundation for a regular Polish Army in Russia
- July 9 Pilsudski's Legions refuse to swear allegiance to the German and Austrian Empires and are interned
- July 15. The Polish National Committee in Paris is recognised by the Allies as an official representative of the Polish Nation.
- July 22. Pilsudski is interned by the Germans at Magdeburg.
- July 26. General Dowbor-Musnicki is named Commander of the First Polish Army Corps in Russia.
- October 15. The Regency Council is constituted at Warsaw.
- December 7. The first Polish cabinet is formed at Warsaw (Kucharzewski).

1918.

January 10.

By virtue of the 13th of *President Wilson's Fourteen Points*, the establishing of an independent and unified Poland, with free access to the sea, becomes an essential condition for peace.¹

February 9.

By virtue of the Treaty of Brzesc (Brest,—between the Central Empires, Soviet Russia and the Ukraine of Skoropadski) a part of the Polish national territory is allotted to the Ukraine ; the consequences : the Kucharzewski Cabinet resigns in Warsaw , a brigade of the Polish Legions, commanded by General Haller, breaks through the front to join with the Polish troops commanded by General Dowbor-Musnicki, in Russia

June 3.

The Allies declare at Versailles that : “ The establishment of an independent and unified Polish State, with free access to the sea, is an essential condition for a just and durable peace in Europe.

¹ “ An independent Polish State should be erected . . . , which should be assured *a free and secure access to the sea*, and whose political and economic integrity should be guaranteed by an International Covenant ”.

- October 7. The Regency Council in Warsaw proclaims Poland independent.
- October. Germany and Austria accept Wilson's 14 Points.
- November 7. The Provisionary Government of Poland (Daszynski) is set up at Lublin.
- November 9 Revolution in Germany
- November 10. Pilsudski released from Magdeburg goes back to Warsaw
- November 11. Capitulation of Germany. The Armistice is signed at Rethondes. Disarming of the Germans in Poland. Warsaw is finally freed. Poland is to commemorate this date as "*Independence Day*", the Germans, as "*the most shameful episode in the history of Germany*".
- November. Defence of Lvov against the Ukrainians. Fights with Soviets in Lithuania and White Ruthenia.
- November 14. The Regency Council transferred its power to Pilsudski who becomes Head of the Polish State.
- December 27. Paderewski, delegate of the Polish National Committee in Paris, arrives in Poznan. The Germans are expelled from Poznan.

1919

January 16. Paderewski is named both President of the Council at Warsaw, and Foreign Minister.

January 23. The Czechs occupy Cieszyn Silesia.

April 19. The Poles occupy Vilno

June 28. *Treaty of Versailles* (signed for Poland by Paderewski for the President of the Republic, in his capacity as Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, and by Dmowski, as President of the Polish National Committee in Paris) which fixed, in part, the territorial statutes of Poland.

X. POLAND RE-BORN

44 The Struggle Not Yet Won.

A great deal of bitterness was mixed with joy in her retound freedom, in Poland. The promise of a "*free and secure access to the sea*" had not been entirely kept. Danzig was made a Free City, it barred the Vistula river passage. Great problems remained unsolved · the question of East Prussia and Upper Silesia,¹ the Western frontiers were not established at

¹ The cession of Upper Silesia to Poland had been incorporated in the original draft of the Treaty of Versailles, as presented to the Germany plenipotentiaries, later, a compromise was agreed upon and it was decided to substitute a consultation of the electorate for the retrocession, pure and simple, of Upper Silesia

any point. Although the Ruthenians and Ukrainians, the Germans and the Czechs had been taken care of, still the war against the Soviets became worse and worse. After a series of successes in the Ukraine, the Poles began a great offensive, in April, 1920 which brought them the possession of Kiev. Then they were forced to fall back, and the situation rapidly became very grave along the entire front. The Red Army invaded Poland and advanced on Warsaw. Under these circumstances, it was not astonishing that the plebiscite in East Prussia, (July 11, 1920) was favourable to Germany, and that the Council of Ambassadors settled the division of Cieszyn Silesia (July 28, 1920). Germany assumed a menacing attitude. The Allies advised Poland to concede to this point. Lithuania signed a treaty (July 10, 1920) with the Soviets, in which Lithuania assigned herself the territory of Vilno. Europe adhered to a rigid neutrality. France alone sent a military mission under General Weygand and armaments, but Danzing and the Czechs refused the passage of these armaments. On the 15th of August, in the evening, Red Army patrols were within 15 kilometers of the capital. Two weeks later in one magnificent dash, the Poles had swept the greater part of their country free of the Russians under the command of Pilsudski, the Commander-in-Chief, seconded by his Chief of Staff, General Rozwadowski, the bulk of the Polish Armies pierced the enemy's Southern flank; at the same time, the army of General Sikorski broke through in the North.

On October 8, Vilno was again retaken, and on the 11th of October, the peace preliminaries were signed at Riga. On March 17, 1921, the Diet (Constituant) passed the Constitution of the Polish Republic. That Charter guaranteed the absolute equality of all citizens. The Government was directly responsible to the Diet, whose members were elected by universal suffrage, equal, direct, secret and proportional, of all citizens aged 21 years and over, without distinction of sex. On the 13th of March, 1921, the Treaty of Riga put an end to the Russo-Polish war. Poland, although victorious, was content with the most moderate territorial arrangements, and with the official repudiation of the Tsarist annexations of Polish soil.¹ Two days later the plebiscite in Upper Silesia took place. Because the Council of Ambassadors found it impossible to agree on an interpretation of the results, Upper Silesia was divided between Poland and Germany.² At the end of 1921, one question still remained open: the territory of Vilno. On February, 20, 1922, this

¹ Conformably to the Treaty of Riga, Poland abandoned to Russia an area of roughly 120 000 sq. miles of her homeland before the first partition, with, in this territory, a million and half Poles.

² "The sentence of Geneva" of October, 20, 1921. It was a disastrous solution of the whole plebiscite area of 4 100 sq. miles. 1 241 sq. miles went to Poland and 2 918 to Germany, 623 000 Poles had remained in this one region outside the frontiers of the Republic, the part which fell to Germany has remained her armoury, the frontier cut across the centre of the Silesian industries, the economic and administrative problems proved to be impossible to solve, and so this province became the nucleus and source of discord between Germany and Poland.

territory, consulted by regular vote of the regional Diet, decided in favour of being joined to Poland. On March, 15, 1923, (General Sikorski as Prime Minister) the Allied Powers definitively ratified the eastern frontier of Poland¹, fixed conformably to the line set by the Treaty of Riga and to the above decision relative to the Vilno region. After four years of bitter struggle the territorial statutes of the Republic were at last definitively established.

Poland consolidated her international position while she worked at home. With an immense social intellectual, industrial and agricultural effort, she rebuilt and restored the accumulated ruin produced by the foreign oppression and war.

Then came the year 1939. *And, as always, the Polish question proved to be the keystone of the international equilibrium. As always, the great unsolved problems, above all the problem of the free and secure access to the sea, and of strategic frontiers, brought on this world cataclysm. As always, the same high ideals, which presided over the formation of Poland, and which, passionately cultivated, have contributed to her greatness—liberty, respect of human dignity and of national particularities, tolerance the spirit of democracy and of federalism—, all these ideals are proclaimed in the*

¹ In accordance with Article 87 of the Treaty of Versailles The United States recognised this frontier on April, 5th, 1923

Charter of the Atlantic as bases for a better world in the future

Poland was the first to resist the burst of Germania which threatened to dominate the world. She always resists heroically, in spite of the hardest sufferings. She fights in the first ranks of the Allied Nations, always faithful to her old motto: *For your freedom and ours*

POLAND WILL LIVE !
